

## **Education and Training across Borders: The Imperative of Quality Assurance in Higher Education**

LAWAL, Yekini Olawaiye, (PhD.)<sup>1</sup>, SALAMI OluwatosinAbdulrasheed, (MSc.)<sup>2</sup>, ADU Aghatha,(MSc.)<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Professor of Business administration/Director of Academic Planning, Afe Babalola University, Ado Ekiti, Nigeria.*

<sup>2</sup>*Lecturer II, College of Sciences Afe Babalola University, Ado Ekiti, Nigeria.*

<sup>3</sup>*Assistant Lecturer, College of Social and Management Sciences, Afe Babalola University, Ado Ekiti, Nigeria.*  
*Corresponding Author: LAWAL, Yekini Olawaiye*

---

**Abstract:** Education is one of the fundamental factors for effective national development. Higher Education is generally considered as an important contributor to the socio-economic development of any country. Quality in education implies that the educational standard can be measured and compared with the established standards by authorized regulators. The European Commission, UNESCO and the African Union are desirous of developing practices and principles in common Quality Assurance standards in Higher Education to ease cross-border education, mobility of students, academic staff and programmes. Regulation of Higher Educational Institutions in Nigeria is virile, effective and efficient. However, it can be more efficient if the activities of academic and professional regulatory agencies are harmonized to achieve joint accreditation visitation. With globalization, there is the increased need to expand access to education across borders which provide accreditation and quality assurance improved access by the developing countries to higher education and training. The greatest barrier to cross-border education is the absence of continental and internationally accepted accreditation guidelines in the Higher institutions. The Association of African Universities and the African Quality Assurance Network (AfriQAN) should assist all African Nations to immediately enact legislation establishing accreditation commissionsto develop minimum academic standards in the respective countries. It should also assist them to collaborate with the goal to adopting minimum academic standards in the region.

**Keywords:** Academic Standard, Accreditation, Education Across Borders, Higher Education, Quality Assurance

---

Date of Submission: 13-09-2019

Date of Acceptance: 01-10-2019

---

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

**1.1 Education has various definitions.** Lawal, (2013) described education as the process of acquiring knowledge, skills, attitudes, interest, abilities, competence and the cultural norms of a society by people and to transmit this to the coming generations to enhance perpetual development of the society. According to (Adamu and Addamu, 2012:823) "Education is one of the fundamental factors for development." Regrettably, in Nigeria, rather than education being used as an instrument for effective development, many had used it as a tool for destruction (Lawal, 2013). Lawal however took solace in the evolving National Universities revised curricula, the reforms and the innovation in the teaching and learning which have been introduced by the emerging private universities whose programmes are being tailored to use education as an instrument for effective national development.

**1.2 Higher education** simply refers to education at tertiary level. Adamu and Addamu (2012) opined that, Higher Education is generally considered as an important contributor to the socio-economic development of a country. They argued that, more than ever before in human history, the wealth or poverty of a nation depended on the quality of its higher education.

**1.3 Training** is a process, a systematic activity that is performed to modify the skills, attitudes and behavior of an employee to perform a specific job. It is the act of increasing the knowledge and skill of an employee for doing a specific job. It is the organized procedure by which people learn and acquire knowledge and skills for a definite purpose. The purpose of training and development function is to: Organize and facilitate learning and

development and expedite acquisition of knowledge, skills, and abilities required for effective job performance (Cambridge Dictionary). The purpose of training is to organize and facilitate learning and expedite acquisition of knowledge, skills, and abilities required for effective job performance.

**1.4 Quality** may be defined through a variety of approaches such:

- a measure of conformance to stated specifications or
- a measure of effectiveness in achieving institutional goals or
- a measure of the level at which customers' stated demand is satisfied
- a measure of satisfaction provided by the product or service Lawal (2015).

Quality in education implies that the educational standard can be measured and compared with the established standards by some authorized regulators. Quality in higher education may be of two types which may be either:

- intrinsic quality which is the knowledge creating processes and student learning
- extrinsic quality which describes the capacity of a higher education institution to respond to the changing needs of the society with whom they interact.

Emphasizing the importance of quality higher education, UNESCO (1995:1) stated "...without a good training and research system at higher education level, no country could assure a degree of progress compatible with the needs and expectations of a society in which economic development is accompanied by building of a culture of peace based on democracy, tolerance and mutual respect."

**1.5 Quality assurance** is part of quality management that focuses on providing confidence that quality requirements will be fulfilled. It is the assurance that a product or system would perform according to the specifications for which it was designed. According to Lawal (2015), it involves the following:

- all the planned and systematic activities implemented within the quality system that can be demonstrated to provide confidence that a product or service will fulfil requirements for quality and
- ways of preventing mistakes or defects in manufactured products and avoiding problems when delivering solutions or services to customers.

**1.6 Quality assurance in higher education** may be of two-dimensional approaches; internal self-evaluation and external review. In a 2003 project which was funded with the support from the European Commission, the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA, 2003) recommended the establishment of European standards for internal and external quality assurance and for external quality assurance agencies. The report also recommended the creation of the European register for quality assurance agencies and mandated European quality assurance agencies to submit themselves to a cyclical review within five years. Some of the recommendations when implemented were expected to achieve the following:

- improve consistency of quality assurance across the European Higher Education area,
- evolve common reference points for quality assurance,
- evolve a register that will make it easier to identify professional and credible agencies,
- strengthen established procedures for the recognition of qualifications,
- enhance the credibility of the work of quality assurance agencies,
- enhance exchange of viewpoints and experiences amongst agencies and other key stakeholders and
- improve mutual trust among institutions and agencies.

**1.7 Quality Assurance and Cross-border Higher Education:** Desirous of developing practices and principles to guide cross-border provision of higher education, The General Conference of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2005) held between 29 September and 17 October, 2003 invited the Director General of UNESCO to embark on the project titled "Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education". The guidelines were to ease cross-border education, through mobility of students, academic staff and programmes. It was considered that cross border education would increase opportunities for improving skills and competence of beneficiaries. The final report which was presented to the resolution of the 33<sup>rd</sup> session of the General Conference in October 2005 identified the following stakeholders as necessary partners for a successful implementation of actions. They included: the government, higher education institutions/providers including academic staff, student bodies, quality assurance and accreditation bodies, academic recognition bodies and professional bodies.

The European Association for quality assurance in Higher Education laid down the standards and guidelines for internal and external assurance for Higher institutions. To ensure compliance with the standards, it also established a peer review system for quality assurance agencies ENQA, (2009).

**1.8 Problem:** African has many unharmonized and uncoordinated education system resulting from varying admission criteria, curricula and graduation requirements Lawal (2015). Consequently, the African Union through the African Union Commission planned to establish a continental quality assurance and accreditation

agency called Pan African Education Accreditation Agency which will measure, compare and harmonize the performance of higher education institutions and facilitate professional mobility (Kigotho, 2013). The purpose was to have a body that has authority that would enhance quality in all private and government higher education institutions including the conventional, open and long-distance learning institutions. Its other goal was to achieve mobility of scholars, researchers and students within the continent. However, Africa has not evolved a benchmark for higher education that would allow mobility of education and training across the borders of the Federating African countries. Many universities have entered into some Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) which could not be effectively consummated because of the absence of common standards for credit transfers.

**1.9 Objective of Study:** This study was conducted mainly to determine the factors mitigating against cross border education and training (free exchange of students and faculty members of universities across borders) particularly among many Nigerian universities and foreign universities.

## II. METHODS

Personal interview and structured questionnaires were administered to respondents who were made up of volunteers from among the Directors of Academic Planning of Nigerian universities (CODAPNU) who agreed to be part of the study on condition of confidentiality and anonymity. This was supported by data which were collected from primary and secondary sources. Descriptive statistic was used to present the data.

## III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Higher education has tended to a global world, where students seek admissions in foreign universities to acquire international experience and opportunity to study alongside multinational students. However, mobility across countries has been hampered by; the absence of generally accepted common curricular on the various programmes among nations and absence of statutory organizations in most countries particularly in Africa that are responsible for the design, regulation and compliance with standards. In many African Countries, there only exist education commissions and education inspectors. The absence of these requirements had frustrated the actualization of the numerous Memoranda of understanding (MOU) signed by Nigerian universities with universities in several parts of the World including Africa especially, neighbouring countries of West Africa.

It was also found that, most of the Nigerian students who transferred from foreign universities could not be properly placed with their local counterparts who are transferring within. Most of them had to be placed at lower levels below their local colleagues because of the large disparity in their curricular. Whereas, transferring from one Nigeria University to the other was seamless because of the existence of the Basic Minimum Academic Standard (BMAS) operated in Nigeria.

**3.1 Factors Required to Facilitate Cross Border Education and training:** These were the parameters identified as required to facilitate cross border education and training. They include:

- establishment of National admission requirements, procedure and policies,
- National curricula,
- National quality control method,
- National quality assurance procedure,
- National and Evaluation and
- Regional harmonization of these standards by the collaborating nations.

In Nigeria, higher education is strictly regulated.

**3.2 Regulation of Higher Educational Institutions in Nigeria:** In Nigeria, there exist commissions that are established by law to regulate the registration and monitor the activities and operations of higher education. Their functions start from resource assessment which is required for the approval to establish educational institution up to the mandatory regular accreditation visitation exercises and unannounced quality assurance visitations. For ease of operation, Higher education in Nigeria is broken into three distinct divisions which are:

**3.2.1 Universities:** The National Universities Commission act NUC (1988) empowers the Commission to lay down minimum standards for the Universities in the Federation and to accredit their degrees and other academic awards. In preparation for the mobility of students and staff among Nigerian universities at various levels of each programme, the NUC in collaboration with the existing Nigerian universities, their staff and other stakeholders developed the Benchmark Minimum Academic Standards (BMAS) documents which were an amalgam that crisply enunciates the learning outcomes and competences expected of graduates of each academic programme without being overly prescriptive. While at the same time, providing the requisite flexibility and innovativeness consistent with a milieu of increased institutional autonomy (NUC, 2007).

**3.2.2. Polytechnic and Colleges of Technology:** The National Board for Technical Education by Act 9 of January 1977 as amended in August, 1985 and Act No.9 of 1st January 1993 is empowered to set academic standards and regulate the awards of the certificates of the Polytechnic and Colleges of Technology (NBTE, 1993).

**3.2.3. Colleges of Education:** The National Commission for Colleges of Education Act No.3 of 13 January 1989 was also set up to regulate the academic programmes of the sector (NCCE, 1989).

These regulatory bodies have identical mandates but in their respective divisions. With these arrangements, there is unfettered mobility of staff and students among the institutions. The commissions have put in place modalities to review the curricular of their institutions every five years in response to emergence of Information and Communication Technologies on teaching and learning and the competitiveness engendered by globalization. As part of their statutory duties, these commissions conduct scheduled scoring accreditation visitations at regular intervals in addition to unscheduled non-scoring quality assurance visitations. In addition to academic regulation, there are agents of government that regulate professional practice in Nigeria. Among them are:

**3.2.4 The Council for the Regulation of Engineering in Nigeria (COREN)** which was established to regulate the Practice of Engineering in all aspects comprising; Engineers, Engineering Technologists, Engineering Technicians, Engineering Craftsmen) and Consulting firms wishing to practice or engage in the practice of engineering (COREN, 1992).

**3.2.5 The Medical and Dental Practitioners Act Cap 221 (now Cap M8) which set up the Medical and Dental Council of Nigeria** (MDCN, 1990) was established by law to regulate the practice of medical and dental professions in Nigeria. In a recent professional examination conducted by the Medical and Dental Council of Nigeria (MDCN), 437 out of the 696 medical and dental foreign trained doctors failed the remedial course and assessment examination of MDCN. Some of the students interviewed blamed their failure on the absence of a standard curriculum operated by the MDCN and other foreign medical schools in other countries where they trained.

**3.2.6 The Legal Education Act 1962** which set up the Council of Legal Education to regulate the practice of lawyers in Nigeria (CLE, 1962).

**3.3. Procedure for Accreditation by the NUC:** The activities of the NUC is illustrated here.

**Step one:**

With the participation of all relevant stake holders, the commission established a Basic Minimum Academic Standard (BMAS) for each academic programme. The documents are made available to all universities in hard format and displayed in pdf format on the NUC portal on open access.

**Step Two:**

The commission developed check list of required resources to be provided to secure approval to commence a new programme.

**Step Three:**

The commission developed another check list of required resources to be provided for accreditation.

**Step Four:**

Prior to any visitation, the commission sends the relevant self-study form to the institution to be visited to self-assess itself and return the completed form and the university's and the programme hand book which includes the curriculum and staff list to the commission.

**Step Five:**

The Commission sends a peer review team of Professors in the relevant subject area which is drawn from various universities who are guided by the Commissions score sheet to visit and assess the university. During the accreditation exercise, the NUC examines facilities under various headings as stated in the NUC guidelines (NUC, 2012). A sample of the score card is presented in table 1.

**Step Six**

The commission reviews the team's report and recommendations and draws its decision and communicate to the affected university. The result of the accreditation exercise is used to determine the future of the university. The result is classified into three categories as explained below:

**3.3.1. Categorization of Accreditation Results:** The decision of the NUC comes in three categories depending on the level of compliance of the visited university with the stipulated standards. They are:

- **Full Accreditation:** For a university to be granted five-year full accreditation, the institution requires a grand total score not less than 70% and a minimum 70% in each of the four main components, (a) academic content, (b) staffing, (c) physical facilities and (d) library.
- **Interim Accreditation:** Obtaining a grand total score of not less than 60% as well as not less than 70% in three of the four main components listed in the last paragraph gives the institution two-year interim accreditation.
- **Denied Accreditation:** An institution that falls outside those listed above is denied accreditation. Such institution would be allowed to graduate the students already in the programme if it had earlier been accredited but would not be allowed to admit new students with effect from the successive admission exercise.

**3.3.2. Post Accreditation Report and Its Usefulness:** Analysis of the reports would reveal the strengths and weaknesses of the institution. It is very useful as it strengthens the negotiation effort of management with its governing Council and Board of Trustee that had hitherto been unwilling to finance critical projects of the university.

**Table 1:** A sample of the score card of the Nigeria National Universities Commission (NUC) for Accreditation

<b>a).ACADEMIC CONTENT (main Component)</b>	<b>Maximum Score (a)</b>	<b>Score Obtained (b)</b>	<b>% Score (a/b)x100</b>
Philosophy and objectives	1		
Curriculum	2		
Admissions	2		
Academic Regulations	2		
Tests and Examinations	3		
Evaluation of Students' work	2		
Practical/Projects Work	2		
Student Course Evaluation	2		
External Examination System	2		
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>b).STAFFING (main Component)</b>			
Teaching Staff			
Staff/student Ratio	8		
Staff Mix by Rank	5		
Qualifications	7		
Competence	1		
Administration	3		
Non-Teaching Staff	3		
Staff Development	5		
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>c).PHYSICAL FACILITIES (main Component)</b>			
Laboratories, etc			
Space	4		
Equipment	7		
Classrooms			
Space	5		
Equipment	3		
Office Accommodation	5		
Safety and Environment	3		
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>d).LIBRARY (main Component)</b>			
Physical			
Holdings	6		
Currency	4		
Electronic			

E-books/e-journals	5		
Adequacy of PCs	3		
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>%</b>
e). <b>Funding</b>	3		<b>%</b>
<b>f). Employers' Rating</b>	2		<b>%</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>%</b>

Source: NUC guidelines (NUC, 2012).

**3.3.3. Regulation of Higher Educational Institutions in Africa:** In Africa, the Association of African Universities which is based in Ghana has recently established the African Quality Assurance Network (AfriQAN) which was designed to ensure quality assurance in Africa. The establishment of (AfriQAN) presupposed that there already existed generally accepted regional quality set standards in Africa which in reality does not exist. Although, there are already established higher education accreditation bodies in some individual participating countries, quality in most of them are monitored by inspectorate divisions in their Ministries of Education which have no legal authority to sanction violators of the regulations.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

With globalization, there is the increased need for human mobility, increased trade and technological development of developing countries which is predicated on higher education and training. This author agreed with Bloom et al., who espoused that higher education is central to economic and political development, plays critical capacity building, professional training and promote technological development roles in support of all the Millennium Development Goals (MDG).

Higher education across borders is a very important route to expand access by the developing countries to higher education and training and promote faster technological. The greatest barrier to cross-border education is the absence of continental and internationally accepted accreditation guidelines in the Higher institutions. In Africa, there exist several national accreditation bodies with uncoordinated accreditation guidelines. The following are recommended.

#### V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Education across borders started in Africa when new universities were established and were affiliated with foreign universities. In Nigeria, the university of Ibadan started as an affiliation of the University of London. The affiliation achieved two goals; cross-border education and quality assurance. The establishment of the West African School Certificate Examination offered joint minimum curricula and quality assurance across borders of the West African countries. The West African College of Surgeons and the West African College of Nurses offer education across borders and quality assurance.

International accreditation and quality assurance agency is desirable to measure, compare and harmonize the academic standards of higher education institutions and facilitate professional mobility, mobility of scholars, researchers and students within the continent. Accreditation guidelines should be internationalized to facilitate seamless transfer of education and training across borders. The following timeline is recommended:

- a) The Association of African Universities and the African Quality Assurance Network (AfriQAN) should assist all African Nations to immediately enact legislation establishing accreditation commissions.
- b) The Association of African Universities should assist the commissions to develop minimum academic standards in the respective countries.
- c) In the interim, those current countries that have established national accreditation bodies and minimum academic standards should be assisted to collaborate with the goal to adopting minimum academic standards in the region.

These done, seamless mobility of education and training across borders would have been significantly stimulated.

#### REFERENCES

- [1]. Adamu Y. Abebaw and Addamu, M. Aster (2012), Quality Assurance in Ethiopia Higher Education. Procedures and Practices. International Conference on Educational Psychology (ICEEPSY 2012). Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences 69 (2012) 838 – 846. Sciverse ScienceDirect. Assessed 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2018.
- [2]. Bloom, David E., David Canning, Kevin Chan (2006), Higher education and economic development in Africa. Africa Region Human Development Working Paper Series, No. 102. International government publication. Washington, D.C. : World Bank, 2006
- [3]. Council for the Regulation of Engineering in Nigeria, (COREN, 1992), Decree 55 of 1970 and amended by Decree 27 of 1992, now the “Engineers (Registration, etc) Act, CAP E11 of 2004” Law of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The Act establishes COREN

- [4]. Council of Legal Education (CLE, 1962), Legal Education Act 1962.
- [5]. European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education Area (ENQA), (2009), Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (3rd Ed). European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education. Helsinki. Down loaded October 2015.
- [6]. Kigotho Wachira (2013), Pan-African quality assurance and accreditation moves. University World News. The Global window on Higher Education. Issue No. 276. 15 June 2013. [www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20130614161617828](http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20130614161617828). Downloaded 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2015.
- [7]. Lawal, Yekini Olawaiye (2015), Accreditation and Quality Assurance in Higher Education. Paper presented at the Workshop on Teaching and Learning Methodologies Organized by Afe Babalola University, Ado Ekiti, 11<sup>th</sup> -14<sup>th</sup> October 2015.
- [8]. Lawal, Yekini Olawaiye (2013), Education as an Instrument for Effective National Development: Which Way Nigeria. Business & Entrepreneurship Journal, Vol.2, No.2, 2013, 27-38 ISSN: 2241-3022 (print version), 2241-312X (online) Scienpress Ltd., United Kingdom.
- [9]. Medical and Dental Practitioners, (MDCN, 1990), Act Cap 221 (now Cap M8) Laws of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1990.
- [10]. National Board for Technical Education, (NBTE, 1993), Act 9 of January 1977 as amended in August 1985 and Act No.9 of 1st January 1993.
- [11]. National Commission for Colleges of Education, (NCCE, 1989), Act No.3 of 13 January 1989.
- [12]. National Universities Commission, (NUC, 1988), Decree (Act) No. 16 of 1985 as amended Decree (Act) No. 49 of 1988.
- [13]. National Universities Commission, (NUC, 2007), Benchmark Minimum Academic Standard (BMAS) For Undergraduate Programmes in Nigeria Universities. 2007.
- [14]. National Universities Commission, (NUC, 2012), Manual Of Accreditation Procedures or Academic Programmes in Nigerian Universities (MAP) March 2012.
- [15]. UNESCO (1995), Strategies for Change and Development in Higher Education. Policy Paper in Higher Education. United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization. <https://www.google.com/search?q=%E2%80%A2%09UNESCO+%281993%29%2C%09Strategies+for+Change+and+Development+in+Higher+Education.+Policy+Paper+in+Higher+Education.+United+Nations+Educational+Scientific+and+Cultural+Organization.&ie=utf-8&oe=utf-8&client=firefox-b>. Assessed 10<sup>th</sup> July 2018.
- [16]. UNESCO (2005), UNESCO/OECD Guidelines on Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education. United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization. 2005. Paris. <http://www.oecd.org/education/skills-beyond-school/unescooecdguidelinesonqualityprovisionincross-borderhighereducation>. Downloaded 17<sup>th</sup> October 2015.

IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR-JHSS) is UGC approved Journal with Sl. No. 5070, Journal no. 49323.

LAWAL, Yekini Olawaiye. " Education and Training across Borders: The Imperative of Quality Assurance in Higher Education." IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS). vol. 24 no. 09, 2019, pp. 54-60.